

Christian Wheatbelt Fellowship

Nurturing and Mobilizing God's People in the 'Bush'



CRCA MINISTRY FORMATION

"A Church Reforming To Reach the Lost for Christ"

www.ministryformation.com.au

A New Kingdom Opportunity

The Gospel outreach in the rural towns of the wheatbelt has by God's grace been an exciting initiative of the Christian Reformed Church of Perth as they were presented with an opportunity to pastorally support a few South African migrant families. This work began in March 2006 and has grown to now include around 20 Australian residents from a number of rural towns.

From the beginning the CRC Perth has had the support of the other churches in Classis Western Australia. It reached the stage where they needed to take the next step in developing this mission if the growth is to continue any further in Wongan Hills and beyond. A weekly commitment by a church planter was required. This initiative led the CRC Perth to hire an additional pastor, Rainier Noppers for the work in Perth. He arrived on December 5th allowing Perth's pastor Geoff Van Schie to concentrate on planting churches in the rural towns.

In dependence upon God and in obedience to His mandate to make disciples a vision was developed for this outreach to the wheatbelt. The CRC Perth adopted a vision to win the lost for Christ in rural townships to the praise and glory of God, to establish self sustaining networks of local town churches that in turn will reproduce new networks of churches in towns further afield (like ever expanding ripples of water), to develop a 'church of the air' by which services are webcast live to satellite centres in more remote country towns and stations, so

that isolated people and communities are bonded to church communities in larger rural centres from which they will be pastorally supported.

Opportunities for growth have already presented themselves which already need more resourcing. These opportunities include a growing number of migrant families in outlying towns. Through families living in Dalwallinu, the CRC Perth became aware of other families who could be followed up, including a new family who just arrived and were living in Kalannie. Another family was due to arrive and settle in Wongan Hills in October 2007 and already committed itself to join the circle.

Also, local Australian residents have welcomed the CRC presence and are responding positively to visitations. Local families in Wongan Hills are followed up regularly and nurtured towards inclusion. The Lord willing, they in turn will reach out to other families. Families who have attended services occasionally have expressed a willingness to be followed up.

There are also opportunities for opening a new worship centre other than Wongan Hills. In September 2007, through a round of visits to members in Dalwallinu, it was made clear that there could be a possibility of preaching in Dalwallinu that eventually could lead to a new preaching centre.



All current members of the Christian Reformed Church Wheatbelt Fellowship are committed to the establishment and development of local small group fellowships as a means to reaching out to unchurched local townfolk. These small groups need to be established and developed. Local leaders can be identified and trained in each town.

Through local small town fellowship groups the Lord may add to the Wheatbelt Fellowship and in time more worship centres could be established. Christian education of young people within the church and possibly through Scripture classes in the local town schools will take place on a weekly basis.

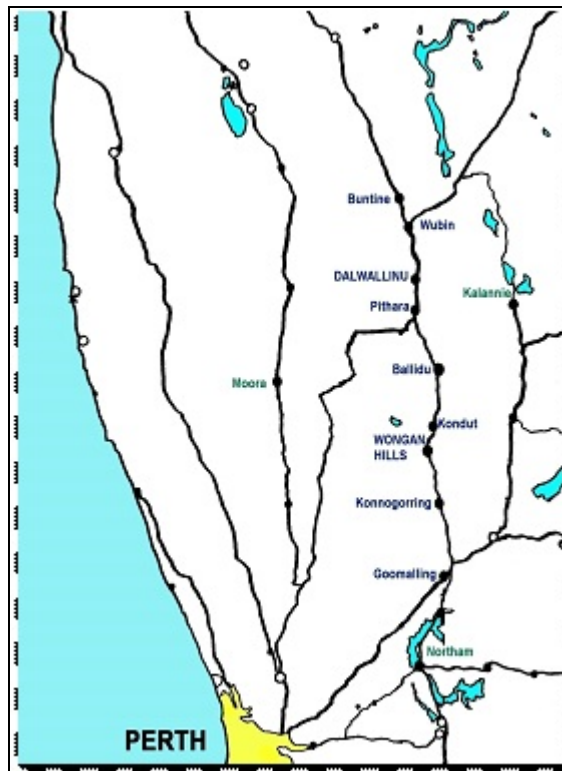
Scripture classes will promote good relationships with families of the children being taught and possibly lead family members to the local small group meetings. The fellowship already has a strong contact with a teacher of one of the town schools.

This outreach could also lead to further small groups being established in centres where CRCA folk have moved to as they leave Perth. All that is needed is one or more families being willing to meet in their home to get the ball rolling. Centres

include places like Geraldton, Carnarvon, Karratha, and Port Hedland.

The Vision

An interdenominational community supported and led by the CRCA to reach the rural towns and their related farms with the Gospel.



This vision realises that no one denomination can sustain a full time ministry when the largest towns are no more than 1,500 to 2,000 in population size – many towns are just 500-800. The last thing these towns need is yet another small church of 10 or fifteen people doing their own thing and splitting the ‘faith’ resources of the communities. What is needed is a gathering together of faithful Christian folk to nurture and encourage each other in their relationship with Christ and to effectively reach out with the Gospel to their communities in a

united way.

It is envisaged that each person, if they desire, retains their denominational identity – that is, they will not need to become members of the CRCA. However the format of worship, including the sacraments and what is preached, will be in line with the standards of the CRCA. The last two years at Wongan Hills has proven there are people from various denominational backgrounds who are willing to sit under Reformed preaching and leadership and who do want to reach

their communities with the Gospel.

The Mission

Through the CRCA to gather rural Christians together to work as one in their communities for the extension of the Kingdom of God through the faithful collective proclamation of the Gospel.

This will include:

- Provision of an ordained minister from the CRCA to pastorally lead and care for those in the towns and on the farms
- Regular worship services in the towns led by this ordained minister
- Establishment of small groups in each town (support in the case of existing fellowship groups) for the purpose of faith nurture and outreach with the Gospel
- Pastoral visitation and care of those who join this interdenominational fellowship
- Training and equipping of local people for leadership, mentoring and personal Gospel witnessing

The Goals

Local town home groups will be developed and supported to provide personal spiritual growth and leadership training.

Those with gifts of leadership are to be trained to become leaders of these groups.

These home groups will be centres of outreach to their local areas by being 'bridge building' centres. Relationships can be grown through which the unconverted in the local region can be introduced to Christ.

These home groups will be trained to become centres of pastoral care whereby each member of the group is responsible

for the pastoral care of all the others. These home groups will then be the first port of call for the delivery of pastoral care. In cases where more experienced care needs to be provided, a centrally located minister will be at hand to meet any need the home group believes to be beyond their ability to cope with.

Worship centres will be established in strategic townships where people from various home groups in outlying townships can gather for worship to hear strong biblical preaching with practical application to life.



Live coverage of services via the internet will eventually be provided to more remote towns, where those serviced in this way will be pastorally supported by a minister based in a central township. (This will depend on the roll out of broadband in the bush as per the government's policy).

The spiritual isolation of children will be cut through catechism classes conducted using the internet. Children hundreds of kilometres apart will meet each other using existing conferencing tools.

Geoff Van Schie' Blog of 03 May 2008:

"Last Sunday's visit to the wheatbelt was a further visit to those we normally make. As you will remember, up till now the monthly visits have not impacted on the local work at Perth CRC either financially or as to increasing my workload. This is so since the weekend visits and services these past two years have been held on Classis swap Sundays when I would have been rostered to preach elsewhere anyway. This last visit was an extra and special one in answer to a request from people in Dalwallinu (300km north east of Perth) to see what might be done in their township among Christians of various denominations.

The first engagement was a Braai on Saturday night hosted by one of the South African families who have been regulars at the Wongan Hills services. There Florence and I met a few more local migrant families and now have established a basis to build closer relationships with these folk. It was great to see one of these people at the service the next morning. We also met some key community folk (leaders of the local volunteer fire brigade who had just come from a house fire) the contact with whom can be significant in terms of building relationships in the town.

Sunday morning was most encouraging as thirty townfolk from Pithara, Buntine and Dalwallinu itself, turned up for worship and for the meeting to follow over lunch to discuss how CRC Perth might help them in our outreach ministry to the wheatbelt. After the service many shared how much they had enjoyed the service and been built up by it and were looking forward to the next one – these are people for whom

there has been no ordained leadership for many years and there is no prospect they will ever have an ordained minister again.

At the meeting over lunch Florence and I were amazed at the enthusiasm people of various denominations had to come under the leadership of CRC Perth's Wheatbelt Christian Ministry. As the group threw around ideas as to how often to meet and on what Sunday of the month, one suggestion that would have had such meetings once every three months was very quickly dismissed as, in the words of several people, the opportunity to have an ordained minister to come and lead them regularly in worship and provide pastoral care was too good to pass up. It was also clear these people were very keen in their small community settings in which none would ever afford their own minister, to come together as an interdenominational fellowship for the nurture of each other in the faith and to work together to reach their communities with the Gospel.

What was very heartening is that after I made clear that the preaching and teaching would be such that I would remain faithful to my ordination vows within the CRCA – i.e. my preaching would be true to Reformed doctrine, and that the sacraments would be administered according to CRCA practices - this was taken as understandable and entirely acceptable.

The outcome of the meeting was such that it is clear a monthly service was the way people wanted to go. There was also a clear and warm acceptance of the growth of our presence in the wheatbelt once CRC Perth has its second minister. These folk now will go back to their respective denominational groups and

discuss this further and it was agreed we would have another service on the next month there was five Sundays, which makes it June 29th. At that meeting various denominational groups would report back and a vote would be taken as to the way forward. I was very much buoyed by a number of people who assured me this would grow as word got out about something so positive.

That the CRC Perth outreach is being welcomed with open arms by these local townsfolk, some of whom have been on farms or in the towns for three generations, is a huge blessing. This is something for which we need to give thanks to God. To be involved in outreach in which the Lord is moving ahead of us and opening up doors is both exciting and humbling. Let us pray that He will continue to lead us and help us to have the faith and trust in Him to provide all we need to do the work He has laid before us not only in the rural areas but also here locally at Colombo Street.